

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

BRUSH MANAGEMENT

(Acre)

CODE 314

DEFINITION

The management or removal of woody (non-herbaceous or succulent) plants including those that are invasive and noxious.

PURPOSES

This practice may be applied to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- Restore natural plant community balance.
- Create the desired plant community consistent with the ecological site.
- Reduce competition for space, moisture, and sunlight between desired and unwanted plants.
- Restore or release desired vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality, and enhance stream flow.
- Maintain, modify, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat including that associated with threatened and endangered species.
- Improve forage accessibility, quality, and quantity for livestock and wildlife.
- Protect life and property from wildfire hazards.
- Improve visibility and access for handling livestock.

CONDITIONS WHERE THIS PRACTICE APPLIES

On all lands, except active cropland, where removal, reduction, or manipulation of woody (non-herbaceous or succulent) plants is desired.

This practice does not apply to removal of woody vegetation by prescribed fire (use

Conservation Practice 338, Prescribed Burning.)

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable for All Purposes

Brush management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community based on species composition, structure, density, and canopy (or foliar), cover, or height.

Brush management will be applied in a manner to achieve the desired control of the target woody species and protection of desired species. This will be accomplished by mechanical, chemical, burning, or biological methods either alone or in combination. When prescribed burning is used as a method, Conservation Practice 338, Prescribed Burning, will also be applied.

When the intent is to manage trees for silvicultural purposes, use Conservation Practice 666, Forest Stand Improvement.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will not develop biological or chemical treatment recommendations, except for biological control utilizing grazing animals. In such cases, Conservation Practice 528, Prescribed Grazing, is used to ensure desired results are achieved and maintained. NRCS may provide clients with acceptable biological and/or chemical control references.

Follow-up treatments may be necessary to achieve objectives.

Additional Criteria for Creating the Desired Plant Community Consistent with the Ecological Site

Use applicable Ecological Site Description (ESD) state and transition models to develop specifications that are ecologically sound and defensible. Treatments must be congruent

with dynamics of the ecological site(s) and keyed to state and plant community phases that have the potential and capability to support the desired plant community. If an ESD is not available, base specifications on the best approximation of the desired plant community composition, structure, and function.

Additional Criteria for Restoring or Releasing Desired Vegetative Cover to Protect Soils, Control Erosion, Reduce Sediment, Improve Water Quality, or Enhance Stream Flow

Choose a method of control that results in the least amount of soil disturbance if soil erosion potential is high and re-vegetation is slow or uncertain leaving the site vulnerable to long-term exposure to soil loss.

In conjunction with other conservation practices, the number, sequence, and timing of soil disturbing operations shall be managed to maintain soil loss within acceptable levels using approved erosion prediction technology.

Additional Criteria to Maintain, Modify, or Enhance Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Brush management will be planned and applied in a manner to meet the habitat requirements for wildlife species of concern as determined by an approved habitat evaluation procedure.

Conduct treatments during periods of the year that accommodate reproduction and other life-cycle requirements of target wildlife and pollinator species and in accordance with Construction Specifications developed for 644, Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, and 645, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

Additional Criteria to Improve Forage Accessibility, Quality, and Quantity for Livestock and Wildlife

Timing and sequence of brush management shall be planned in coordination with Construction Specifications developed for 528, Prescribed Grazing.

Additional Criteria to Manage Fuel Loads to Achieve Desired Conditions

Control undesirable woody plants in a manner that creates the desired plant community. Control the desired fuel load to reduce the risk of wildfire and facilitate the future application of prescribed fire.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider using Conservation Practice 315, Integrated Herbaceous Weed Control, in support of brush management.

Consider the appropriate time period for treatment. Some brush management activities can be effective when applied within a single year; others may require multiple years of treatment(s) to achieve desired objectives.

Consider the removal of target species seed sources which may occur on adjacent landscape positions.

Consider impacts and consequences to obligate species (species dependent on the target woody species) when significant changes are planned to existing and adjacent plant communities.

Consider impacts to wildlife food supplies, space, and cover availability when planning the method and amount of brush management.

State-issued licenses may be required when using chemical pesticide treatments.

For air quality purposes, consider using chemical methods of brush management that minimize chemical drift and excessive chemical usage. Consider mechanical methods of brush management that minimize the entrainment of particulate matter.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for the treatment option(s) selected by the decision maker will be recorded for each field or management unit where brush management will be applied.

Prepare brush management plans and specifications that conform to all applicable federal, state, and local laws. These documents will contain the following data as a minimum:

1. Goals and objectives clearly stated.

2. Pre-treatment cover or density of the target plant(s) and the planned post-treatment cover or density and desired efficacy.
3. Maps, drawings, and/or narratives detailing or identifying areas to be treated, pattern of treatment (if applicable), and areas that will not be disturbed.
4. A monitoring plan will be implemented that identifies what should be measured (including timing and frequency) and documents changes in the plant community (compare with objectives).

A brush management plan shall be designed and certified on Form KS-ECS-314, Brush Management.

For Mechanical Treatment Methods: Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 4 above, plus the following:

- Types of equipment and any modifications necessary to enable the equipment to adequately complete the job.
- Dates of treatment to best effect control.
- Operating instructions (if applicable).
- Techniques or procedures to be followed.

For Chemical Treatment Methods: Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 4 above, plus the following:

- Acceptable chemical treatment references for containment and management or control of target species.
- Evaluation and interpretation of herbicide risks associated with the selected treatment(s).
- Acceptable dates or plant growth stage at application to best effect control and dampen reinvasion.
- Any special mitigation, timing considerations, or other factors (such as soil texture and organic matter content) that must be considered to ensure the safest, most effective application of the herbicide.
- Evaluation and interpretation of herbicide risks associated with the selected treatment(s) using Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (WIN-PST) or other approved tools.

- Reference to product label instructions.

For Biological Treatment Methods: Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 4 above, plus the following:

- Acceptable biological treatment references for containment and management or control of target species.
- Kind of grazing animal to be used, if applicable.
- Timing, frequency, duration, and intensity of grazing or browsing.
- Desired degree of grazing or browsing use for effective control of target species.
- Maximum allowable degree of use on desirable non-target species.
- Special mitigation, precautions, or requirements associated with the selected treatment(s).

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation: Brush management practices shall be applied using approved materials and procedures. Operations will comply with all local, state, and federal laws and ordinances.

Success of the practice shall be determined by evaluating post-treatment regrowth of target species after sufficient time has passed to monitor the situation and gather reliable data. Length of evaluation periods will depend on the woody species being monitored, proximity of propagules (seeds, branches, and roots) to the site, transport mode of seeds (wind or animals), and methods and materials used.

The operator will develop a safety plan for individuals exposed to chemicals, including telephone numbers and addresses of emergency treatment centers and the telephone number for the nearest poison control center. The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) telephone number in Corvallis, Oregon, may also be given for non-emergency information: **1-800-858-7384**

Monday to Friday

6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time

The national Chemical Transportation Emergency Center (CHEMTRAC) telephone number is: 1-800-424-9300

- Follow label requirements for mixing/loading setbacks from wells, intermittent streams and rivers, natural or impounded ponds and lakes, and reservoirs.
- Post signs, according to label directions and/or federal, state, tribal, and local laws, around fields that have been treated. Follow restricted entry intervals.
- Dispose of herbicides and herbicide containers in accordance with label directions and adhere to federal, state, tribal, and local regulations.
- Read and follow label directions and maintain appropriate Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). MSDS and pesticide labels may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.greenbook.net/>.
- Calibrate application equipment according to recommendations before each seasonal use and with each major chemical and site change.
- Replace worn nozzle tips, cracked hoses, and faulty gauges on spray equipment.
- Maintain records of brush/shrub control for at least two years. Herbicide application records shall be in accordance with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service's Pesticide Recordkeeping Program and state-specific requirements.

Maintenance: Following initial application, some regrowth, re-sprouting, or reoccurrence of brush may be expected. Spot treatment of individual plants or areas needing re-treatment should be completed as needed while woody vegetation is small and most vulnerable to desired treatment procedures.

Review and update the plan periodically in order to:

- Incorporate new integrated pest management technology.
- Respond to grazing management and complex plant population changes.
- Avoid the development of plant resistance to herbicide chemicals.

REFERENCES

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